

# QUICK FACTS REPORT SERIES

## Nebraska Youth

While Nebraska may be far away from the negative influences of the east and west coasts, and it is a great place to raise children, parents still need to be aware of the dangers their children face when it comes to alcohol and tobacco. Let's start by looking at the following data from the 1995 National\* and 1997 Nebraska Youth Risk Behavior Surveys:

\* The 1997 National Statistics had not been released as of March 5, 1998. 1995 statistics for Nebraska were cited where indicated by the 1995 date.

### 3 EYE-OPENERS ON NEBRASKA YOUTH, ALCOHOL, AND TOBACCO

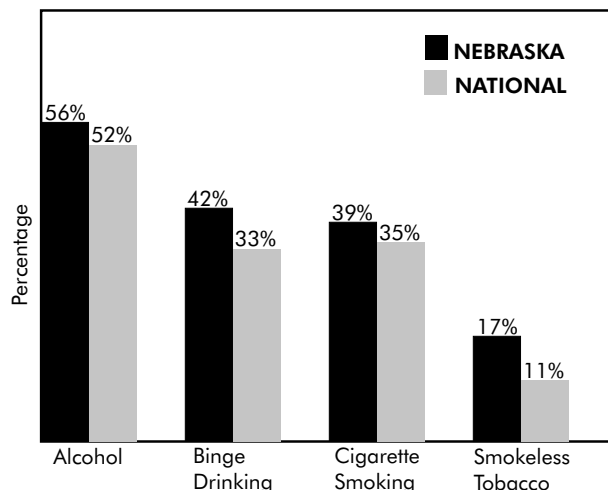
#### EYE-OPENER #1:

#### Nebraska kids use more than other kids nationally:

- ★ 56% of Nebraska high school students in grades 9 through 12 consumed alcohol in the last month (compared to 52% nationally)
- ★ 42% of Nebraska high school students binge drank\* in the last month (compared to 33% nationally)
- ★ 39% of Nebraska high school students smoked cigarettes in the past month (compared to 35% nationally)
- ★ 17% of Nebraska high school students used smokeless tobacco in the past month (compared to 11% nationally)

\* binge drinking is defined as having 5 drinks or more at one sitting, enough to make kids (and adults) legally intoxicated

You may be surprised to see that Nebraska has a higher rate than the national usage rate among adolescents in drinking alcohol, binge drinking, tobacco (both smokeless and cigarettes). One thing is for sure, Nebraska is not a safe haven from the widespread problem of adolescent alcohol and other drug use.



  
nebraska council  
TO PREVENT ALCOHOL AND DRUG ABUSE

## EYE-OPENER #2:

### Kids are using alcohol and tobacco earlier, and early use is very dangerous:

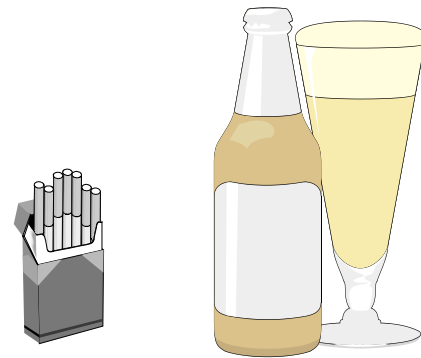
Most adolescent alcohol and tobacco begins between ages 10 and 15. The average age of first use is about 13 years old. This is very concerning because the younger the age at which kids begin to drink alcohol or smoke cigarettes the greater the chance that they experience a bunch of problems, such as:

- ★**use illicit drugs** such as marijuana or cocaine
- ★**do poorly in school/drop out of school**  
early and regular alcohol use is tied to poor grades, behavior problems in school and school dropout
- ★**choose troubled peers as friends**  
early alcohol use is related to involvement in antisocial behavior
- ★**commit crimes**  
one-third of youth in juvenile detention facilities report drinking at the time of their criminal behavior
- ★**have premature and risky sex**  
when teens use alcohol, they not only start having sex at a young age, but they have sex more frequently, with more partners, and use protection less
- ★**have emotional problems**  
many youth who have attempted suicide were using alcohol at the time
- ★**cause injury or death to themselves or others**  
alcohol is frequently involved in the four leading causes of death among young people: car crashes, homicides, suicides, and drowning
- ★**become addicted to alcohol, cigarettes and other drugs**  
youth who begin using alcohol early, especially before age 15, are more likely to be heavy users and to become dependent on alcohol and/or drugs later as they get older.

## EYE-OPENER #3:

### Alcohol and tobacco are very dangerous drugs for kids to use:

Alcohol causes more problems and hurts more youth than all other drugs combined. Sadly, nearly all deaths from smoking result from a habit acquired early in life, the teen years. Alcohol and cigarettes are often called gateway drugs because they serve as a training ground or entry to the use of other drugs. In fact, kids rarely use illicit drugs (such as marijuana or cocaine) without having first used alcohol or smoked cigarettes. Inhalants and marijuana are usually the next drugs in the sequence used by adolescents.



Want proof? A person who has smoked cigarettes or consumed alcohol is 65 times more likely to use marijuana than a person who has not smoked or consumed alcohol. And, the risk of using cocaine is over 100 times higher for someone who has smoked marijuana at least once in his or her lifetime (National Institute on Drug Abuse). Not all kids who smoke cigarettes or drink alcohol will move on to illicit drug use, but many do. Just as important, those who don't use alcohol or tobacco almost never use illicit drugs!



# A CLOSER LOOK AT THE GATEWAYS

## YOUTH AND ALCOHOL

Some parents know, or at least suspect, that their children drink alcohol. They may even feel relieved that their child is "just" drinking alcohol, and not doing "hard" drugs. They may even have consumed alcohol themselves as kids and suffered few problems. They may think that drinking is just a normal part of growing up. But what might appear "normal" is certainly not healthy. Let's take a look at

- ★ Alcohol is the most used drug by adolescents in Nebraska, as well as in the rest of the U.S.
- ★ Teens are major consumers of alcoholic beverages in the U.S.:
  - ★35% of all wine coolers sold in the U.S. are consumed by junior and senior high school students
  - ★American adolescents drink 1.1 billion cans of beer every year
  - ★Alcohol is a primary contributor to the four leading causes of death among young people ages 15 to 24: car crashes, homicides, suicides, drowning

### What are the favorite alcoholic beverages of youth?

Wine coolers and beer are the favorites. Youth like wine coolers because they do not have a strong taste of alcohol. Therefore, teens are likely to think that wine coolers have less alcohol when, in fact, some wine coolers contain as much alcohol as two beers.

### What is binge drinking and why is it so dangerous?

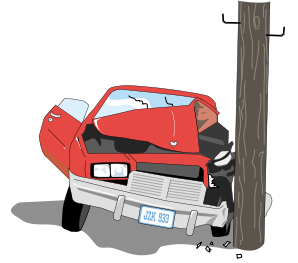
To start with, any alcohol use by youth is dangerous and certainly illegal. But binge drinking is particularly dangerous. The more alcohol a person consumes, the greater the impairment experienced and the greater the risk for many problems: fighting, teen pregnancy, accidents, and alcohol poisoning, just to name a few.

**Nebraska ranks second in the country in binge drinking by youth**

**-second only to Montana**

### How often is it happening?

By 9th grade, 35% of Nebraska and 25% of American students have binge drank in the past month. By 12th grade, Nebraska students are out-bingeing their national counterparts at 65% compared to 39% nationally who binge drank in the past month.



### Drinking and driving - who's doing it?

- ★25% of Nebraska 10th graders drove after drinking alcohol in the past month
- ★26% of Nebraska 11th graders drove after drinking alcohol in the past month
- ★47% of Nebraska 12th graders drove after drinking alcohol in the past month
- ★Of Nebraska high school students who drove after drinking in the past month 66% did so two or more times

### Riding with a drinking driver - who's doing it?

- ★51% of Nebraska 7th and 8th graders rode with a drinking driver in the past month (1995)
- ★72% of high school students who rode with a drinking driver did so two or more times in the past month

### Alcohol and sexual activity - what's the link?

We know that alcohol use increases the chance of adolescents becoming sexually active at a younger age:

- ★19% of Nebraska 7th and 8th graders have had sexual intercourse (1995)
- ★38% of Nebraska 9th graders have had sexual intercourse
- ★72% of Nebraska 12th grade students have had sexual intercourse

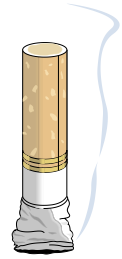
## YOUTH AND TOBACCO

Tobacco kills more people in this country than all other drugs put together:

- ★3,000 teenagers start smoking every day
- ★1,000 of the 3,000 teens who begin smoking every day will eventually die from smoking-related illnesses
- ★Smoking is responsible for more than 1 of every 5 deaths
- ★Smoking is the single most preventable cause of death in the United States.

### Nebraska teens and smoking

- ★53% of Nebraska 7th and 8th graders have already tried cigarette smoking (1995)
- ★68% of 9th graders have smoked
- ★78% have smoked by the last year in high school
- ★21% of Nebraska 7th and 8th graders have smoked during the past month
- ★35% of Nebraska 9th graders have smoked during the past month
- ★57% of Nebraska 12th graders have smoked in during the past month



**The nicotine in tobacco is highly addictive, even**

### What about smokeless tobacco?

The number of adolescent boys who chew tobacco is increasing, especially in Nebraska.

- ★31% of Nebraska male high school students used chew in the last month, compared with 20% nationally

**3,000 teens will begin smoking today 1,000 of them will eventually die of a smoking-related illness.**

The statistics displayed here may astound you but remember, that even if your child is not using, he/she is surrounded by peers who are. Adolescent alcohol and drug use has become a "normal" part of adolescent life, even in Nebraska. However, as you can see from the long list of consequences, it is far from healthy for young people. The longer you as parents can help delay the onset of use, the less likely your children will be to experience these negative consequences. And the greater chance your children will have satisfying and healthy lives.

#### References

Health priorities for the 90's {Cassette Recording, 4/21/92}, Novello, A. (speaker); Nebraska Adolescents, 1995 and 1997, NE Dept. of Health; Preventing drug Use Among Children and Adolescents, 1997, National Institute on Drug Abuse, National Institutes of Health, Publication No. 97-4212; systematically Preventing Alcohol and Other Drug Problems, Prevention Programming for Existing Nebraska Youth Groups: Promising Strategies from the Research Literature, Nebraska Council to Prevent Alcohol and drug Abuse; Too many young people drink and know too little about the consequences, Office for Substance abuse Prevention (1991); Youth Risk Behavior Study, NE Dept. of Health, 1995.

This Quick Facts Report was produced by the Alcohol and Drug Information Clearinghouse, Nebraska Council to prevent Alcohol and Drug Abuse. For more information contact:

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